



Engels' sketch of a gathering of "The Free"

## Engels Recalls

Karl Marx and Frederick Engels did not spring fully-formed from the head of a revolutionary God. They were products of an environment that was Hegelian, and "Hegelianist".

Let us recap. [George William Frederick Hegel](#), Philosopher, died of cholera in Berlin in 1831. In that year, [Karl von Clausewitz](#), who had applied Hegel's thought to [military science](#), died in the same epidemic. Both these men had achieved high honours and high academic positions in Prussia in their lifetimes.

For the following ten years, under the sponsorship of the Prussian Minister of Culture, "Hegelianism" became an academic cult in Prussia, which was the dominant German and Central European power at the time.

The Hegelianist period in Germany was not altogether a "Triumphal Procession" (as Engels called it). It was not uniform over time. It developed internal contradictions. Hegelianism as a whole began to be problematic for the Prussian monarchist,

semi-feudal state. This was not surprising. Whatever Hegel himself or his sponsors may have thought about the completion of history, in practice Hegel had let the dialectical genie out of its bottle. New theories of revolution were bound to arise from it, and did arise.

As a consequence, Hegelianism was actively discouraged in Prussia from 1841. The opening event of this attempted suppression was the series of official state-sponsored lectures given by [F W J Schelling](#) in 1841, in the presence of a considerable number of subsequently-famous people, including Frederick Engels. We will return to this event, known as the “[Expurgation of Hegelianism](#)”, in the next part.

The internal divisions in Hegelianism included “Left” and “Right” Hegelians, and the “Young Hegelians” (self-named “The Free”). The latter were people known to Karl Marx and Engels.

Marx had been studying in Berlin from 1836, and began associating with the Young Hegelians in 1838 (when Marx was 20). Engels spent the year of 1841 in Berlin as a military cadet where he, too, associated himself with the Young Hegelians (see Engels’ sketch of a gathering of “The Free”, above).

The two future revolutionaries did not meet in Berlin, but only met in 1842, in Cologne, Germany, when Marx was editing the magazine *Rheinische Zeitung*, and Engels was on his way to England. Both were by this time having problems with the Young Hegelians.

Marx and Engels teamed up permanently in late 1844, in Paris, France, and in the following twelve months or so they worked

out, for the first time, as a concrete set of revolutionary ideas, what people now call “Marxism”. They did so in a polemical process, and their polemical opponents were the other former Young Hegelians, especially Bruno Bauer and Max Stirner. The background of the polemic was their common grounding in Hegel’s philosophy. In that sense, Hegel could be said to be the third founder of Marxism, with Marx and Engels.

The foreground of the polemic with the other Young Hegelians was a matter of setting aside the non-revolutionary, essentially reactionary, anti-semitic trend of Bauer, and the anarchist trend of Stirner.

Marx and Engels’ combined polemic against the Young Hegelians was commenced almost as soon as they got together, and it was completed in the same year, 1844, to be published the following year, 1845. This was their first joint work, their first jointly published work, and their last work that was not yet fully “Marxist”. It is called “[The Holy Family](#)”. Marx and Engels were not satisfied with it, so in 1845 they began to write another work of polemic against the Young Hegelians, known as “[The German Ideology](#)”, which includes the “[Theses on Feuerbach](#)”. This book is indeed fully Marxist. It was not published in full until after their deaths, but the composition of “The German Ideology” undoubtedly marks the true beginning of mature “Marxism”.

The purpose of the above recapitulation is to show that the birth of Marxism is full of the legacy of Hegel. It is reasonable to say that Marx and Engels set out to defend Hegel’s legacy against Schelling, Bauer, Stirner and all comers, while at the

same time correcting, developing and improving on Hegel's work, and that this Hegelian project of theirs turned into what we know as Marxism. The argument begins among Hegelians, in contestation with other Hegelians. This shows why it was that when Engels, late in life and after the death of Marx, came to sum up their work in various ways, the recollection of these origins brought Hegel's theories to the forefront once again.

The enormous amount of work that Engels did after Marx's 1883 death included the editing and publication of "Capital", Volumes 2 and 3, the writing of "The Origin of the Family, Private Property and The State" (based partly on Marx's papers), and the preparation of the 1886 pamphlet called in full "[Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy](#)". Engels died in 1895.

Our main reading matter is the first and the fourth of the four sections of Engels' "Ludwig Feuerbach", of which the hero, jointly with Marx, is Hegel. Engels states in the first part ("Hegel") that they were in a "*philosophical revolution*". In the fourth part ("Marx"), Engels states: "*Hegel was not simply put aside. On the contrary, a start was made from his revolutionary side, described above, from the dialectical method*".

The documents given here are short and readable, and in keeping with the Communist University practice of giving you original writings. The next will be one by Hegel himself.

- The above is to introduce the original reading-text: '[Ludwig Feuerbach', 1886, Engels \(Hegel and Marx\)](#).
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